



NAVY HISTORY MATTERS

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Welcome to Navy History Matters—our weekly compilation of articles, commentaries, and blogs related to history and heritage. Every week we'll gather the top-interest items from a variety of media and social media sources and then link you to related content at NHHC's website (history.navy.mil), your authoritative source for Navy history.

★ Navy Names New Carrier USS Doris Miller

The Navy announced the next *Ford*-class aircraft carrier is named in honor of decorated [World War II](#) hero [Doris "Dorie" Miller](#). Miller, from Waco, TX, was onboard [USS West Virginia](#) on Dec. 7, 1941, when the Japanese attacked [Pearl Harbor](#). During the attack, he aided his dying commanding officer, Capt. [Mervyn S. Bennion](#) and then, while under fire, operated a .50-cal machine gun, on which he had not been trained. Miller fired on the enemy until he ran out of ammunition and was ordered to abandon ship. For his bravery, he received the [Navy Cross](#). Nearly two years later, Miller was onboard escort carrier [USS Liscome Bay](#) when a Japanese submarine torpedoed the ship during the invasion of the [Gilbert Islands](#). Miller was among the more than 600 crewmembers killed in the attack. [Watch the story](#) at CBS News to hear more from NHHC historian Regina Akers. [See the ceremony](#) on the Navy Live blog.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/biographies-list/bios-m/miller-doris.html>

★ Bathyscaphe Trieste Made History

On Jan. 23, 1960, the bathyscaphe *Trieste* descended on a nine-hour journey seven miles to the deepest part of the world's oceans—Challenger Deep—located at the southern end of the Mariana Trench. Navy Lt. Don Walsh and Jacques Piccard made the historic dive. Piccard's father, Swiss physicist Auguste Piccard, was the inventor of the research bathyscaphe, which was the development of a concept first studied in 1937. [World War II](#) delayed Piccard's work until 1945 when he worked with the French government on its development. In 1952, Piccard was invited to Trieste, Italy, to commence construction. In August 1953, the bathyscaphe was first placed in the water and, later that month, Piccard and his son dove to a depth of five fathoms. In 1958, the U.S. Navy acquired the vessel and transported it to San Diego, CA, where it was fitted with a stronger sphere. For more, check out the new [Bathyscaphe Trieste](#) page on [NHHC's website](#). On Jan. 23, the [National Museum of the U.S. Navy](#) is scheduled to host a [60th anniversary commemorative event](#) at the [Bathyscaphe Trieste exhibit](#), featuring Walsh as the guest of honor.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhnc-series/nh-series/NH-96000/NH-96798.html>

★ WWII@75: USS Higbee Commissioned

On Jan. 27, 1945, destroyer [USS Higbee](#) was commissioned. The ship is the first U.S. Navy combat ship to bear the name of a female member of the naval service. [Lenah Sutcliffe Higbee](#) entered the U.S. Navy Nurse Corps in 1908, became Chief Nurse of Norfolk Naval Hospital in 1909, and was the second Superintendent of the Navy Nurse Corps in 1911. For her service during [World War I](#), Higbee received the [Navy Cross](#)—the first woman to receive the decoration while still living. After commissioning in 1945, *Higbee* was converted to a radar-picket destroyer and, after shakedown, sailed for the Pacific, joining Carrier Task Force 38. During the remainder of [World War II](#), *Higbee* screened carriers and launched heavy attacks on the Japanese mainland. In 1950, *Higbee* deployed to the Korean coast after North Korean troops invaded South Korea. During the [Korean War](#), *Higbee* participated in the pivotal [invasion of Inchon](#). The destroyer deployed three times to Korea, earning seven battle stars during the war.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nara-series/usn/USN-1040000/USN-1045968.html>

★ Navy SEAL with Harvard Medical Degree Becomes NASA Astronaut

He is a former enlisted [Navy SEAL](#), decorated [Iraq War](#) veteran, and Harvard Medical School graduate. Navy Reserve Lt. Jonny Kim can now add NASA astronaut to his resume. On Jan. 10, Kim graduated from NASA's 22nd astronaut candidate class, making him eligible for missions to the International Space Station, the moon, and even Mars. His path to the stars started in Los Angeles, where his South Korean immigrant father ran a liquor store. After high school, he enlisted in the Navy in 2002, and after completing the qualification course, joined SEAL Team 3. While Kim was serving in Iraq, members of his unit were killed in action, including [Medal of Honor](#) recipient Petty Officer 2nd Class [Michael Monsoor](#). "They were phenomenal human beings," Kim said. "I promised to live a life of service to make up for the people they were leaving behind. I wanted to become a doctor and return to the battlefield to save lives." Kim believes his SEAL training and combat experience has prepared him well for work in space. For more, [read the article](#) in *Stars & Stripes*. To learn more about the [Navy's role in space exploration](#), go to [NHHC's website](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.stripes.com/news/navy/navy-seal-with-harvard-medical-degree-becomes-nasa-astronaut-1.614854>

★ Darien Expedition—150 Years Ago

The Darien Expedition, led by Cmdr. [Thomas O. Selfridge](#) of gunboat [Nipsic](#), departed the Brooklyn Navy Yard on Jan. 22, 1870, to survey the Isthmus of Darien at Panama to determine the best route for a ship canal. U.S. Navy ships [Guard](#) and [Nyack](#) also participated in the expedition. The routes explored during the two-year voyage all proved impractical at the time, and the dream of an interoceanic canal went unfulfilled until more than 40 years later when the Panama Canal was completed in 1914.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-64000/NH-64694.html>

★ First Superintendent of WNY Appointed—220 Years Ago

Capt. [Thomas Tingey](#) was appointed by Secretary of the Navy [Benjamin Stoddert](#) to supervise construction of the new [Washington Navy Yard](#) in Washington, DC, Jan. 22, 1800. During his tenure, Tingey oversaw the WNY grow to the Navy's largest shipbuilding and ship-fitting facility, with vessels constructed ranging from 70-foot gunboats to the 246-foot steam frigate [Minnesota](#). [Constitution](#) came to the yard in 1812 to refit and prepare for combat action. In the summer of 1814, during the [War of 1812](#), as the British marched into Washington, the Secretary of the Navy ordered Tingey to scorch the yard to prevent its capture. Tingey returned after the withdrawal of British forces and commanded the yard until his death on Feb. 23, 1829. Tingey was buried with military honors in what is now known as the Congressional Cemetery in Washington, DC.

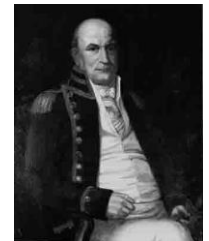


Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/NH-43000/NH-43038-KN.html>

★ How Hats Serve as a Sense of Pride for the U.S. Navy

Jan. 15 marked National Hat Day, and millions of people sported their favorite cap. Hats say a lot about a person's personality and, in the Navy, they also serve as a sense of pride. John Pentangelo, director of [Hampton Roads Naval Museum](#), said hats tell many stories and, through the years, they have evolved. Especially around the time of the [Civil War](#), the Navy grew exponentially and so did the regulations. "That's around the time the flat cap came into play, it's also known as the Donald Duck hat. It was in service around the Civil War," said Pentangelo. "And then in the 1880s, this famous Dixie Cup was introduced. It is iconic and is what most people think of when they think 'Sailor.' They think of this hat and of course it's still in service today." For more, [watch the story](#) on WAVY-TV's website. For more on the famous [Dixie Cup](#), go to NHHC's collection of [infographics](#).



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/news-and-events/multimedia-gallery/infographics/heritage/the-dixie-cup.html>

★ Inside America's Daring Plan to Mine Haiphong Harbor

On the night of May 8, 1972, President [Richard Nixon](#) was preparing a speech to communicate his dissatisfaction with the leaders of North Vietnam, mostly about their ally the Soviet Union. Weeks earlier, North Vietnam launched a massive attack using Soviet tanks, artillery, and other advanced weaponry. Nixon's speech was intended to inform Americans that he had ordered the military to drop mines in Haiphong Harbor and other North Vietnamese ports to keep military supplies out of the country. At that point in the [Vietnam War](#), the United States was in the midst of withdrawing troops, leaving only two U.S. Army combat brigades on the ground. The aircraft chosen for the operation were the A-7E Corsair II and A-6A Intruder based on aircraft carrier [Coral Sea](#). For more, [read the article](#) in *Navy Times*.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/nh-series/USN-1151000/USN-1151725.html>

★ Indiana's Oldest Employee, a WWII Navy Vet, Set to Retire

He has worked for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources since 1962, but now he says that it is time to go. Bob Vollmer, 102 years old, will report to work as a surveyor for the last time on Feb. 6. The [World War II](#) veteran still collects technical field data and confirms boundary lines, but he said that his body is telling him to retire. Vollmer said he plans to spend his retirement reading and farming. He also plans to take trips to the South Pacific, where he was during the war. Vollmer enlisted in the Navy after the [Pearl Harbor attack](#). He served in the [Aleutians](#), [Philippines](#), and [Tarawa](#). After the war, Vollmer graduated from Purdue University in 1952 with a degree in biological and agricultural engineering. For more, [read the article](#) in *Navy Times*.



Photo Link: <https://www.navytimes.com/news/your-navy/2020/01/15/indianas-oldest-employee-a-wwii-navy-vet-retires/>

★ NHHC Webpage of the Week

This week's Webpage of the Week is a new entry on NHHC's [DANFS](#) index. Named in honor of Ensign [Jesse L. Brown](#), who was the first [African American](#) to complete the Navy's basic flight training program for pilot qualification and to be designated a [naval aviator](#), [USS Jesse L. Brown](#) was commissioned at the Boston Naval Shipyard on Feb. 17, 1973. The ship's sponsor was the widow of the ship's namesake, Daisy P. Thorne, and the matron of honor was his daughter. Over the course of the frigate's service, she received the Battle Efficiency "E" award multiple times, participated in a multitude of training exercises with foreign navies, conducted numerous drug interdiction operations, and participated in humanitarian operations. NHHC historian Stephanie Harry authored the history.



Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs/j/jesse-l-brown--de-1089-.html>

★ Today in Naval History

On Jan. 21, 1954, the world's first nuclear-powered [submarine](#), [USS Nautilus](#), was christened and launched at Groton, CT. For the next several years, *Nautilus* underwent various types of testing and trials. In October 1957, the Soviet Union launched the *Sputnik* satellite and, in response, the United States countered with "Operation Sunshine"—a fully submerged transit under the ice at the North Pole. After a first failed attempt, *Nautilus*, commanded by [William R. Anderson](#), became the first naval vessel to reach the geographic North Pole on Aug. 3, 1958. From the North Pole, the boat continued on and, after 96 hours and 1,830 miles under the ice, surfaced northeast of Greenland, having completed the first successful voyage across the "top of the world."



For more dates in naval history, including your selected span of dates, see [Year at a Glance](#) at [NHHC's website](#). Be sure to check this page regularly, as content is updated frequently.

Photo Link: <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhhc/our-collections/photography/numerical-list-of-images/nhhc-series/ua-collection/ua-475-05-02-launching-of-uss-nautilus--ssn-571--.html>